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Viewing cable 07BEIJING1668, WU YI INTERVENES AS DR. GAO CASE LAYS BARE

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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
07BEIJING1668	2007-03-13 09:00	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Beijing

Appears in these articles:

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIJING 001668

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/13/2032
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [CH](#)
SUBJECT: WU YI INTERVENES AS DR. GAO CASE LAYS BARE
CENTER-LOCAL DISCORD

REF: BEIJING 1063 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Ambassador Clark T. Randt, Jr. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

Summary

¶1. (C) Vice Premier Wu Yi personally intervened in the case of Dr. Gao Yaojie in order to break an impasse between the Central Government and Henan Province authorities, xxxxx unusually candid comments, along with other observations from MFA staffers, reveal a glimpse into central-local dissonance and how tough political problems get solved in China. xxxxx complained that Provincial Party Secretaries are using their considerable clout to

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increasingly weigh in with Central authorities on issues that affect foreign policy. In Dr. Gao's case, well-connected Henan Province Party Secretary Xu Guangchun wanted to prevent the doctor from publicly embarrassing the province, which would threaten Xu's own promotion prospects. In the end, only intervention from the highest levels of China's Government induced Henan authorities to relent. xxxxx officials stressed to us China's desire that Dr. Gao's visit to the United States not be "politicized." End Summary.

Candid Talk in an Informal Setting

¶2. (C) Vice Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi topped the cast of several dozen MFA attendees at the Ambassador's Lunar New Year dinner reception February 28. Keen for insights into what prompted the policy switch whereby Henan Province authorities released Dr. Gao from house arrest, Poloffs asked MFA officers at various levels for their reading of how we reached the positive outcome. Dr. Gao arrived in New York February 26 and is scheduled to receive an award at a Vital Voices Global Partnership event in Washington on March 14. She has told the foreign press that intervention from high-level Central leaders (as well as international pressure) likely caused the local government in Henan Province to release her from house arrest and allow her to travel abroad.

Henan Feels the Heat

¶3. (C) xxxxx confirmed Dr. Gao's assertions, remarking that "top leaders" needed to get involved in order to overrule Henan Province Party Secretary Xu Guangchun, xxxxx acknowledged. (Note: Xu, the former head of the State Administration for Radio, Film and Television, is reported to have ties to President Hu Jintao. End note.) xxxxx complained that provincial Party secretaries have considerable clout and are increasingly weighing in with the Central Government on issues that affect foreign policy, diminishing the authority of the MFA in policymaking. Provincial leaders do not listen to the MFA, xxxxx commented. Such was the case with Dr. Gao. xxxxx said neither xxxxx VFM Yang Jiechi to EVFM Dai Bingguo to FM Li Zhaoxing -- had the bureaucratic muscle to fix the problem. Vice Premier Wu herself had to call the authorities in Henan and tell them to allow Dr. Gao to travel.

¶4. (C) Henan officials, including Party Secretary Xu, were likely concerned that if Dr. Gao traveled to the United States, she would do or say something to embarrass the province, which in turn could harm the officials' potential for promotion, xxxxx commented. As a general rule these days, personal advancement is priority No. 1 for local leaders, regardless of their province. "They are most interested in their own political position," xxxxx complained. Provincial leaders do not think about the national interest and, currently, are focused mainly on making sure that "nothing bad happens" to dash their promotion prospects, he said.

Wu Yi's Constant Calls

15. (C) xxxxx related that Vice Premier Wu Yi "ruined" his spring festival holiday break by calling him constantly for updates. After Henan officials released the doctor from house arrest on February 16, Beijing 00001668 002 of 002

the case became even more challenging for the MFA because Central authorities were worried about Dr. Gao causing trouble in Beijing on her way to the United States. Would she hold a press conference? Would the media film her trip to the Embassy to pick up a visa? "We needed to follow the issue very closely," xxxxx related.

16. (C) The MFA was also concerned because "sensitive people" who might be tempted to "manipulate" the matter fastened themselves to Dr. Gao during her time in Beijing. "You know who these people are," xxxxx claimed. xxxxx

17. (C) Although we have no firm evidence, it appears probable that Senator Clinton's personal appeal via letter was a key catalyst behind Vice Premier Wu's intervention in the case. xxxxx told Poloff they thought the Senator's letter struck an appropriate tone. Regardless, Vice Premier Wu's involvement comes at a time when she is taking on a high-visibility role in United States-China relations. xxxxx told the DCM that the Vice Premier called him xxxxx. She gave xxxxx marching orders to present her and the Strategic Economic Dialogue in a proper light, he said. In addition, Vice Premier Wu took an unusually high-level Chinese delegation to Beijing airport March 7 to meet briefly with Treasury Secretary Paulson as he transited on the way to

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Shanghai.

Don't Politicize It

18. (C) Further on public aspects of Dr. Gao's case, MFA International Organizations Deputy Director General Chen Xu and Office of North American Affairs Counselor Deng Hongbo both emphasized that China hopes the doctor will not "politicize" her visit to the United States by making controversial comments casting Henan or China in an unflattering light. In response to Poloffs' observations, xxxxx at the reception acknowledged that Dr. Gao's transit was handled in a low-key way and that their worst fears were not realized during the doctor's Beijing stopover.

Daring Daily Breaks Silence, Criticizes Locals

19. (C) Following her departure, Dr. Gao's travails were broached for the first time by China's own media. On February 26, the Southern Metropolitan Daily ran a daring editorial on the case that criticized "local and regional leaders" and called for greater openness about AIDS and other issues of public concern. However, the editorial has not been widely picked up on the Internet, and so far, the paper does not appear to have encountered any negative repercussions. Randt